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ABSTRACT

Following a brief history of the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System (TIERS) and the development of the RMC models and technical assistance centers, plans are described for activities to increase the usefulness of the evaluation data for local decision making. Three major kinds of activities are explained: projects developed by an Evaluation Use Committee; contracts to support state refinements of TIERS; and the continuing development of models appropriate for evaluating other Title I areas, particularly pre-second grade programs. The Evaluation Use Committee is engaged in producing materials on formative and summative evaluation which will be disseminated through literature reviews, workshops for state and local education agency evaluators and administrators, case studies, suggestions for evaluators, and an annotated bibliography. Contracts to support state refinement of TIERS are divided into four categories: improvement of data collection and analysis activities; development and dissemination of new materials; projects related to testing and evaluation methods; and a miscellaneous category. Materials and strategies suitable for improving and evaluating pre-second grade Title I programs are also being developed for dissemination. (MH)

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THE USE OF TITLE I EVALUATION DATA IN LOCAL DECISION-MAKING -- A FEDERAL PERSPECTIVE

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The Use of Title I Evaluation Data in Local Decision-Making -- A Federal Perspective

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> "The Committee repeats its view that the Office of Education has not assumed the leadership it should have concerning evaluation activities under Title I. ... The Committee urges OE to correct this failing." (Subcommittee on Education, 1974).

Such were the feelings of the Committee on Education and Labor of the House of Representatives in hearings that preceded passage of the Education Amendments of 1974. Those feelings resulted in an amendment (section 151 of P.L. 93-380) to Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, an amendment which has greatly influenced the course of evaluation in Title I programs. In 1977, the General Accounting Office (GAO) published a report titled "Problems and Needed Improvements in Evaluating Office of Education Programs." GAO urged that

> "USOE should more strongly emphasize serving congressional needs in planning and carrying out evaluation studies, should define its program objectives more clearly, and should improve the implementation of evaluation results." (GAO,1977)

The goal was clear, even if the strategies which should be adopted to achieve this goal were less so -- improve the validity and utility of Title I evaluation information, at the Federal, State and local level.

Background

Title I of ESEA states that the policy of the United States will be

> "to provide financial assistance ... to local educational agencies serving areas with concentrations of children from low-income families to expand and improve their educational programs by various means ... which contribute particularly to meeting the special educational needs of educationally deprived children." (ESEA, Title I, section 101, "Declaration of Policy")

In the years since its enactment, the annual appropriation has grown from $959 million to approximately $3 billion, and funds have been used in increasing proportions to provide remedial services in the basic skills (viz., reading, language arts and mathematics) to low achieving students (Wargo, Tallmadge, Lipe, and Morris, 1972; Trismen, Waller, and Wilder, 1976; and NIE, 1977).

Evaluation of the impact of Title I services is required at all three programmatic levels - local, State, and Federal. As stated in section 124(g) of Title I, a local educational agency (LEA) may receive funds only if

> "effective procedures are adopted for evaluating ... the effectiveness of the programs assisted under this title in meeting the special educational needs of educationally deprived children."

Each State educational agency (SEA) is required to report periodically to the U.S. Commissioner of Education (Commissioner) the results of the LEA evaluations, conducted in accordance with an approved schedule. In turn, the Commissioner is required to report to Congress biennially concerning the results of evaluations of the Title I program.

Past attempts at the Federal level to use data from the State evaluation reports to report to Congress have been frustrated by the lack of comparability and sometimes lack of validity of the data in these reports. Both the United States Office of Education (USOE) and the House Education and Labor Committee recognized these problems, and in August, 1974, Congress amended Title I with the addition of section 151. In November, 1978, Congress again amended ESEA, with section 183 of P.L. 95-561 replacing section 151. While the basic requirements for evaluation were retained, some modifications were made to the law. The evaluation requirements can be sum-

marized in the following provisions of the law:

- o independent evaluations which describe and measure the impact of programs and projects,
- o development and publication of standards for evaluation of program or project effectiveness, and the development of an evaluation schedule within each SEA so that representative samples of LEA Title I programs are evaluated each year,
- o provision of joint USOE/SEA evaluation studies,
- o development of models for evaluation, including uniform procedures and criteria to be utilized by LEAs and SEAs, which produce data which is comparable on a statewide and nationwide basis,
- o technical and other assistance to enable SEAs and LEAs to apply the evaluation models.

Implementation of the Legislative Requirements

Section 183 has been interpreted to place priority on assisting SEA and LEAs to implement methodologically sound evaluation models which will produce data which are comparable, and thus aggregatable, on a statewide and nationwide basis. The work to develop standards and models for local and State evaluation of Title I was begun in June, 1974, a few months before the actual legislative mandate for this work was passed. A contract was awarded, through Federal competitive procedures, to RMC Research Corporation of Mountain View, California. That work involved:

- o interviews with policy-makers in both the Executive and Legislative Branches to determine their information needs,
- o a review of all State Title I evaluation reports for the previous five year period,
- o a tabulation of available evaluation data about the Title I program,
- o a determination of the common reporting practices which might be adopted nationwide to service policy-makers' needs,
- o the recommendation of some evaluation and reporting practices,

- o a check on the feasibility of the suggestions with administrators and evaluators in a small sample of states (Gamel, Tallmadge, Wood, and Binkley, 1975).

In June, 1975, this developmental effort was completed, and another award was made to RMC Research Corporation through competitive procedures. That project involved visits to all States and territories, as well as to three LEAs in each, to discuss the prototype system that had been developed and its implications in local settings (Bessey, Rosen, Chiang, and Tallmadge, 1976).

Throughout both projects, two advisory groups were relied upon for recommendations and feedback. The Policy Advisory Group consisted of SEA Title I program administrators and evaluators, LEA program administrators and evaluators, parents, and representatives of both the National Advisory Council on the Education of Disadvantaged Children and the Council of Chief School Officers. The Research Advisory Group included nationally recognized experts in the areas of evaluation and measurement. Both panels reacted to plans, suggested changes, and provided advice through all phases of the work. Comments were also solicited from SEA and LEA administrators during the site visits and have been sought subsequently on an informal basis from States and local administrators involved in trying out the newly developed evaluation procedures.

The resulting Title I Evaluation and Reporting System (TIERS) and its associated reading, mathematics and language arts evaluation models, suitable for use in grades 2 - 12, are well-documented and will not be discussed in detail here. However, it should be noted, that the procedures are essentially refinements of commonly used practices.

Each of the three models specifies procedures for comparing the test performance of the Title I group at the end of the program with an estimate of what that performance would have been without Title I (or Title I in combination with other compensatory educational services) special, supplementary services. The models basically differ in their method of deriving the expected posttest performance (no-treatment expectation).

To meet the priority of assisting States in implementing the Title I evaluation models, USOE personnel have developed a technical assistance program. In October, 1976 the Title I Evaluation Technical Assistance Centers (TACs), the largest component of the assistance program, both in terms of dollar expenditure and person-hours of effort, were funded. Other components of the USOE technical assistance program include the periodic provision of regional workshops on newly developed portions of the TIERS (such as the 9 workshops conducted in the Fall of 1976 by RMC to share the newly-developed regular Title I program evaluation models), and a publications series including monographs, technical pamphlets and newsletters.

The ten (one for each HEW regional area) TACs provide to SEAs and LEAs free consulting services to aid in the evaluation of their Title I programs. Each TAC has developed an agreement with its client SEAs concerning the conditions under which it will provide services to the State and the kinds of services that will be provided. Within the constraints required to be sure that a State is proceeding in a positive manner to meet the requirements of the law, each State agency has been able to determine the areas of consulting services to be emphasized by the TAC within the State.

Meeting Legislative Priorities

The requirement that LEAs use evaluation procedures which produce data comparable on a statewide and nationwide basis places contraints upon the LEAs' choice of procedures. RMC Research Corporation, in its development of the models, attempted to meet the data comparability requirement of the legislation and, at the same time, provide to LEA and SEA decision-makers an evaluation system which would yield useful data. This was a worthy goal, and one endorsed by Congress, but unfortunately it proved virtually impossible to meet the information needs of each of the three levels of decision-makers (local, State and Federal) with one set of procedures. When this became apparent, USOE planners made the choice to develop evaluation models and accompanying report forms that would provide Congress with the information that it requested, and to provide additional assistance to SEAs and LEAs to meet any additional needs through a technical assistance program.

Since September, 1976, USOE personnel have placed first priority on assisting States to implement the reading, mathematics and language arts evaluation models. Without a secure foundation on which to base more elaborate and ambitious evaluation strategies, it would have proven extremely difficult to organize and disseminate evaluation activities aimed at local program improvement. However, it should be noted that although USOE has placed priority on the implementation of the TIERS, assistance in areas of Title I evaluation which are not addressed by these models has been provided to some SEAs and LEAs, and the availability of such services has been made generally known.

The models for assessing the achievement impact of Title I programs have been published in the Federal Register (February 7, 1979), as draft regulations. The hope is that through application of these models at the SEA and LEA levels, USOE will be provided with data that can be used to develop a major component of its report to Congress on the status of the Title I program.

Now that all SEAs are preparing to implement the proposed evaluation models, and many have already done so on a statewide basis for several years, USOE can devote more effort to helping States make better use of the data that is being produced through the implementation of the TIERS and to assist any SEAs or LEAs to develop evaluation strategies that will address questions of program importance and interest that are not adequately answered by implementing the TIERS. In the next sections of this paper, USOE efforts in this area will be discussed.

Activities to Increase the Utility of Evaluation Data

Activities to support local evaluation use are underway in three major areas, with the services provided by the TACs and the funding of fourteen SEA-initiated "State Refinements to the USOE Title I Evaluation System" the most prominent.

An Evaluation Use Committee, charged with the task of investigating methods of increasing the local utility of Title I evaluation data, has been in operation since the Fall of 1978. The Committee, which is composed of TAC staff who are particularly interested in the utility problem, was organized by USOE in response to requests from SEAs and LEAs who wanted to enhance the value both of data collected as part

of the TIERS system as well as that collected as part of a more general program evaluation framework. The current effort is aimed primarily at those SEAs and LEAs who have reqested assistance in this area, although attempts are being made to increase interest among those program administrators who have not routinely been using their evaluation results for program review, planning and improvement. Often, interest in data use has evolved from a previous involvement in other areas necessitating the development of a sound evaluation framework, such as the preparation for a submission for exempiary project certification through the Joint Dissemination Review Panel (JDRP).

The Evaluation Use Committee has taken a two-faceted approach, determined in part by philosophical differences among Committee members. One subgroup is concentrating their efforts on product evaluation -- primarily TIERS data, which includes some background project descriptors and estimated NCE gains -- while the other subgroup is focusing on process evaluation. The two subgroups will combine their work into an integrated report, including instructional materials, which will be produced under the coordination of the Region V TAC Directors. These materials will represent a synthesis of work done by all of the TACs. The goals of this project are to develop an orientation towards asking meaningful questions about programs, to emphasize the need for quality data, to show how evaluation data generated from the TIERS can appropriately be interpreted, to illustrate the planning and implementation of a formative evaluation strategy, and to provide actual examples of how evaluation data have been used in decision-making.

The materials produced and collated by the Committee will consist of a literature review of articles, books or reports on evaluation use,

workshops for LEA and SEA evaluators and administrators, case studies, suggestions for evaluators, and an annotated bibliography. The literature review will cover methods of evaluation as well as providing the reader with examples of productive evaluations.

An evaluation use workshop series, aimed at encouraging LEA use of TIERS data, is under development. The primary method used is the presentation of vignettes, each of which raises questions about the meaning of the evaluation results presented. Four major categories of evaluation data use are identified: improving evaluation procedures, Title I program decisions, informing interested groups, and within-project planning decisions. While the workshop series is intended to enhance the production and employment of valid and accurate TIERS data at the district level, the need for additional information beyond what is routinely collected through the TIERS is also emphasized. In addition, the workshop highlights include data quality issues that are known to affect evaluation results, such as the accuracy of score conversions and analysis. Staff at the Region III TAC are also developing a workshop package, with the emphasis to be on the implementation of process evaluation as an adjunct to the TIERS.

One workshop to be included will cover the area of effectively using Title I evaluation data for local decision-making. One segment considers various definitions and perceptions of evaluation, while another shows the relationships between program planning and evaluation planning, program implementation and evaluation implementation, and the ultimate role of evaluation in program modification. A separate segment considers appropriate data and presentation methods for reporting and effectively communicating test or evaluation results to various audiences.

The materials package will also contain case studies of actual Title I project evaluations in order to provide information on problems which may be encountered, as well as to provide examples of successful evaluation strategies. Up to now, most LEAs (though certainly not all) have focused their evaluation efforts on the Federally-required activities outlined in the proposed regulations. However, interest goes far beyond this, particularly as the implementation of the required evaluation activities becomes well-incorporated into the district's activity cycle. As the required evaluations get underway, LEAs feel that they are able to expand their evaluation program to include other areas.

As an example of expanded evaluation activity, spurred on by the basic TIERS requirements, the State of Iowa (with support from their TAC) is developing a broad evaluation program, including periodic special, intensive studies of the services provided. The first step in this process was an effort to ensure that the data generated were of good quality. Once this was done, the next phase was to identify specific program variables that seem to be associated with student achievement. After successful practices are identified, they will be disseminated to LEAs so that they can be incorporated into plans to improve the Title I reading program. In addition, the study will provide the SEA with a detailed description of the instructional practices, methods and materials currently employed in the State.

In addition to the Evaluation Use Committee, and related work of the TACs, a second major area of Federal support for local and State use of evaluation data is through a set of contracts for "State Refinements to the USOE Title I Evaluation and Reporting System." In fiscal year 1979, fourteen contracts were awarded to support these activities.

These awards fall into four main categories: improvement of data collection and analysis activities, development and dissemination of new materials, projects related to testing and evaluation methodology, and a miscellaneous category. Three SEAs were awarded contracts to work in the "quality control" area -- cataloging errors made in data collection, score conversion, and analysis, and then implementing an evaluation program less susceptible to these threats to validity. Five SEAs received awards to develop and disseminate new materials, including slide/tape presentations, reference guides, software development and training and implementation materials. Four SEAs are conducting projects related to testing and evaluation methodology, including efforts to examine alternative methods of test equating in Title I evaluation, to develop adequate measures of affective impact of Title I services, and to investigate empirically some assumptions of the Title I models as they apply to local situations. In the next round of State Refinement contracts, USOE is currently considering the addition of several new explicit categories for which awards could be made. One new category may focus on improving the utility of evaluation information at the local and SEA levels, and another may examine the management efficiency related to the adoption of the USOE TIERS. For example, in the former category, an SEA could examine how Title I data are used, if at all, to improve programs or to design new program components to ensure that gains made in the regular school year are sustained (see P.L. 95-561, sections 124(g)(3) and 124(k)).

A third area of Federal support for improving the utility of Title I evaluation information at the SEA and LEA levels is through the on-going development of models appropriate for evaluating other areas of Title I, particularly pre-second grade programs. This project is now

in its fourth and final phase, which is the actual development of materials and the dissemination of strategies suitable for use at the early grades. In addition to the provision of analysis strategies which may prove useful to examine the impact of these programs on student achievement, substantial effort is being devoted to developing a system where utility at the local level is the prime factor. A system targeted at improving local programs, in which, for example, various methods for defining program objectives, setting up investigative and program review committees, conducting on-site visitations, and collecting and reporting on pertinent information, is being developed. A descriptive reporting system, primarily aimed at providing information on the nature and extent of offered services at the LEA and SEA levels, is also being developed, as is a system for designing and implementing longitudinal evaluations.

Methods for selecting children to participate in early childhood Title I programs, long a restive issue, and methods for evaluating parental involvement components of these programs, are also being investigated. It is expected that, particularly in these two areas, these materials will have ultimate payoff across the spectrum of the Title I program.

In summary, USOE is taking a more active role in working with LEAs, SEAs and Federal contractors to help develop, refine and disseminate utility-based evaluation procedures. A necessary first step was to implement the TIERS, both in order to meet a congressional mandate and to provide a sound basis for more extensive evaluation work. Now that the first goal is well on its way to being met, a larger proportion of activity will be targeted toward using evaluation information for local and State program improvement.

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